



TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

**S.B. No. 1201 AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORIZATION OF STATE GRANT COMMITMENTS
FOR SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS AND REVISIONS TO THE SCHOOL BUILDING
PROJECTS STATUTES**

Good morning, co-chairs Currey and McCrory, vice chairs Leeper and Winfield, ranking members McCarty and Berthel, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Caroline Simmons and I am Mayor of the City of Stamford. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to testify in support of S.B. 1201, “An Act Concerning Authorization of State Grant Commitments for School Building Projects and Revisions to the School Building Projects Statutes.”

As the second largest city in Connecticut, Stamford has experienced incredible growth across all sectors, including in our school district. Stamford Public Schools serves a diverse population of over 16,700 students, providing them with extensive academic and extracurricular activities and programs and a learning experience rich in cultural diversity that prepares them for our global world.

During the last legislative session, my office worked with the Stamford delegation and our Superintendent to increase the reimbursement level to 60% for all new school construction projects over the next 25 years. We also were able to increase the state reimbursement for the project rebuild of Westhill High School from 20% to 80%. While this is considerable funding for our district, we still need additional support, especially as the cost of goods and services and inflation continue to rise.

The Stamford Public Schools is in the process of implementing a comprehensive Long-Term Facilities Plan for our school district, which identified \$1.5 billion in school facility needs. The proposal to rebuild Westhill High School was previously authorized in the 2022 School Building Project Priority List, however, due to changes in cost based on rising construction costs, this bill will reauthorize the project based on the new cost estimate. For the 2023 School Building Project Priority List, Stamford is seeking authorization for a new K-8 Roxbury facility to replace the existing K-5 facility. Passage of S.B. 1201 will ensure the City of Stamford is on track to fulfill our obligation to deliver modern and safe educational facilities for our students and teachers.

The greatest investment our state can make is in our educational system and given the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, now more than ever, greater state support is needed to ensure students have access to resources – academic, emotional, extracurricular, and facilities – needed to be successful.

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I urge you to support S.B. 1201, “An Act Concerning Authorization of State Grant Commitments for School Building Projects and Revisions to the School Building Project Statutes,” as this will be transformational for Stamford schools and will ensure Stamford students, teachers, and administrators have updated and safe learning spaces.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Car Si'.

Mayor Caroline Simmons